

Message Text

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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 AMMAN 9685

NODIS CHEROKEE

FOR THE SECRETARY FROM AMBASSADOR

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: PGOV, PBOR, JO, IS, EG, XF
SUBJECT: HUSSEIN ROLE IN WEST BANK/GAZA DIALOGUE

REF: STATE 307029 (FOR USDEL CAIRO NO. 16)

1. SEPTTEL PRESENTS OUR ASSESSMENT OF FACTORS LIKELY TO INFLUENCE HUSSEIN'S OVERALL VIEW CONCERNING HIS ROLE IN ANY WEST BANK/GAZA DIALOGUE. WE BELIEVE SUBJECT WARRANTS CONTINUING AND CLOSE ATTENTION AND IN THIS CABLE WANT TO ADDRESS SOME EARLY REACTIONS TO THE RELEVANT QUESTIONS POSED REFTTEL. OBVIOUSLY MANY OF THESE QUESTIONS ARE MORE COGENTLY ANSWERED BY OTHER POSTS.

2. WILL THE ISRAELIS BE RELUCTANT TO OPEN AN EXCHANGE IN THE NEAR FUTURE THAT IMPLIES A STAKE FOR HUSSEIN IN THE WEST BANK SETTLEMENT? OUR VIEW IS THAT AS LONG AS THE ISRAELIS WISH TO MAINTAIN REAL CONTROL OVER THE TERRITORY OF THE WEST BANK AND GAZA, OPENING AN EXCHANGE WITH HUSSEIN JEOPARDIZES THAT ISRAELI POSITION. HOWEVER, SHOULD THE ISRAELIS REACH THE CONCLUSION THAT INEVITABLY A WEST BANK SETTLEMENT WILL HAVE TO INVOLVE THE

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RELINQUISHMENT OF A LARGE DEGREE OF CONTROL OVER THE TERRITORY (EVENTUALLY ESSENTIALLY ALL) THEY WILL HAVE TO DECIDE WHETHER THE WEST BANKERS ALONE OR HUSSEIN (POSSIBLY IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE WEST BANKERS) PRESENTS THE BEST ALTERNATIVE. WE HAVE ALWAYS ASSUMED THAT A ROLE FOR HUSSEIN IN SUCH CASE MAKES SENSE IN EASING ISRAEL'S SECURITY CONCERNS. WE HAVE SEEN SOME COUNTERCURRENTS IN RECENT REPORTING THAT

SOME ISRAELIS MAY WELL THINK THE WEST BANKERS (AS OPPOSED TO THE PLO) COULD GO IT ALONE WITH ISRAEL. WE WOULD OBVIOUSLY BE INTERESTED IN TEL AVIV'S REACTION.

3. WOULD HUSSEIN'S INVOLVEMENT FORCE THE ISRAELIS TO FOCUS MORE CLEARLY ON WHAT ROLE THEY ENVISAGE FOR JORDAN IN A WEST BANK SETTLEMENT? WE BELIEVE THE ANSWER TO THIS QUESTION IS OBVIOUSLY YES IF THE ISRAELIS DECIDE OR ARE BROUGHT TO DECIDE THAT HUSSEIN SHOULD BE INVOLVED. THE KEY TO HUSSEIN'S INVOLVEMENT WILL HAVE TO BE AN ARRANGEMENT WHICH WILL YIELD A SUFFICIENT DEGREE OF TERRITORIAL CONTROL TO THE ARABS SO AS TO BE DEFENSIBLE IN THE INTER-ARAB CONTEXT. EGYPTIAN AND SAUDI SUPPORT FOR JORDAN WILL DEPEND UPON THE TERRITORIAL CONTENT OF ANY SETTLEMENT HE CAN WORK OUT. CONVERSELY THE DEGREE OF THEIR SUPPORT FOR SOMETHING LESS THAN COMPLETE RELINQUISHMENT OF THE TERRITORY WOULD OBVIOUSLY BE SIGNIFICANT IN REGARD TO WHAT HUSSEIN WOULD EVENTUALLY AGREE TO ACCEPT.

4. WOULD SADAT FEEL THAT INVOLVING HUSSEIN WITH ISRAELIS COMPLICATES UNDULY HIS OWN STRATEGY? FOR INSTANCE, WOULD SADAT PREFER TO RETAIN FREEDOM TO MAKE HIS OWN JUDGMENT AS TO WHAT KIND OF ISRAELI DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES WOULD BE REQUIRED? WE DEFER TO CAIRO, BUT TEND TO BELIEVE THAT AN EARLY
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ROLE FOR HUSSEIN WOULD BE COMPLICATING FOR SADAT WHILE AT THE SAME TIME WOULD NOT IN ANY WAY DIMINISH HIS "EXPOSURE" IN THE ARAB WORLD. NOR WOULD IT REDUCE IN ANY SIGNIFICANT WAY THE DEMANDS WHICH HE WILL HAVE TO CONTINUE TO PRESS ON THE ISRAELIS REGARDING TERRITORY AND THE PALESTINIANS.

5. WHAT MIGHT WE DO TO ENCOURAGE MORE INTENSIVE CONSULTATION BETWEEN SADAT AND HUSSEIN AND WHAT ADVERSE REACTIONS MIGHT THE EFFORT PRODUCE? WE BELIEVE THAT HUSSEIN OFFERS VERY LITTLE TO SADAT IN THE ABSENCE OF THE ISRAELIS PROVIDING EVENTUALLY A VIABLE PROPOSAL ON THE WEST BANK. GIVEN SADAT'S WELL-KNOWN DISDAIN FOR HUSSEIN AND THE HASHEMITES AND THE FUTURE POTENTIAL FOR TROUBLE FROM THE PALESTINIANS AND THE PLO IF SADAT CONSORTS TOO CLOSELY WITH HUSSEIN, WE BELIEVE HUSSEIN IS A LIABILITY FOR SADAT OR AT BEST HIS ASSETS AND LIABILITIES BALANCE OUT. THEREFORE, OUR ENCOURAGEMENT OF SADAT TO DEAL WITH HUSSEIN SEEMS TO CARRY REAL BURDENS WITH IT. ON THE OTHER HAND, HUSSEIN IS PROBABLY BETTER PLACED TO PURSUE CONSULTATIONS AND A DIALOGUE WITH SADAT. UNDER THESE CIRCUMSTANCES, HUSSEIN'S INTEREST

AND CURIOSITY WILL PROBABLY OVERCOME ANY RELUCTANCE
HE MIGHT HAVE AGAIN TO VISIT WITH SADAT. ALSO HE WILL
PROBABLY WISH TO AVOID SADAT'S COMING TO AMMAN FOR
THE NEAR FUTURE TO AVOID ANY FURTHER DAMAGE IN HIS RELATION-
SHIP WITH ASAD. WE DO NOT KNOW WHAT WENT ON IN
HUSSEIN'S PRIVATE MEETINGS WITH SADAT. WE HAVE CONFLICTING
STORIES OVER WHETHER OR NOT HUSSEIN PROMISED TO JOIN THE TALKS.
QUIET ENCOURAGEMENT OF HUSSEIN TO STAY IN TOUCH WITH SADAT AT
THE MOMENT IS PROBABLY ALL THAT IS POSSIBLE OR NECESSARY.

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NODIS CHEROKEE

FOR THE SECRETARY FROM AMBASSADOR

6. HOW MIGHT THE ISRAELIS REACT TO ENCOURAGEMENT
FROM US TO OPEN A DIALOGUE WITH HUSSEIN?
WE LEAVE THE ANSWER TO TEL AVIV.

7. HOW MIGHT WE BEST APPROACH THE ISRAELIS?
WE LEAVE ALSO TO TEL AVIV.

8. SHOULD WE TRY THIS OUT ON HUSSEIN AND/OR SADAT
BEFORE APPROACHING THE ISRAELIS? I BELIEVE THE
INITIATIVE FOR ANY MOVE TO OPEN AN ISRAELI-HUSSEIN
DIALOGUE SHOULD BE DISCUSSED WITH HUSSEIN FIRST.
THE KEY WILL BE SOME TANGIBLE MOVEMENT OR POSSIBILITY
OF MOVEMENT ON THE ISRAELI SIDE. THE MORE OPEN AND
PUBLIC THE DIALOGUE THE MORE PALPABLE AND TANGIBLE
THE MOVEMENT WILL HAVE TO BE. I BELIEVE WE SHOULD
CONSULT HUSSEIN ALSO ABOUT WHETHER WE SHOULD TALK
TO SADAT. I BELIEVE HUSSEIN WOULD FAVOR INITIAL
CONTACTS WITH THE ISRAELIS ON A PRIVATE AND BILATERAL
BASIS ONLY.

9. WHAT RISKS DO WE (AND HUSSEIN) RUN, PARTICULARLY
WITH SYRIANS, IN THE LIKELY EVENT THERE ARE LEAKS
ABOUT SUCH A THREE-WAY CONVERSATION (AND OUR
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INVOLVEMENT) EVEN IF IT IS KEPT IN DISCREET CHANNELS?
WHAT SERIOUS PRESSURES CAN SYRIANS IMPOSE ON HUSSEIN
AS REACTION TO HIS INVOLVEMENT IN THESE NEGOTIATIONS?
HUSSEIN BELIEVES THAT HIS RELATIONSHIP WITH SYRIA
IS CLOSE TO THE BREAKING POINT. HE FEELS HE HAS ABOUT
USED UP WHATEVER INFLUENCE AND POLITICAL CAPITAL HE MAY
HAVE GENERATED WITH ASAD OVER THE PAST TWO YEARS. HE IS
THEREFORE LIKELY TO BE VERY DEEPLY CONCERNED THAT LEAKS
ABOUT THE THREE-WAY CONVERSATION WOULD PUSH THINGS OVER
THE BRINK. EGYPTIAN AND U.S. INVOLVEMENT WOULD SOUR
THINGS EVEN MORE WITH THE SYRIANS. AS YOU KNOW THERE HAS
BEEN A STEADY HUM IN THE PRESS OVER THE LAST SEVERAL YEARS
ABOUT ISRAELI-JORDANIAN MEETINGS WHICH DOES NOT SEEM TO
HAVE TROUBLED THE SYRIANS GREATLY. HOWEVER, A NEW RASH
OF PRESS STORIES WHICH COULD BE SUBSTANTIATED WOULD CER-
TAINLY RAISE DIFFICULTIES IN TERMS OF REACTIONS OR RETALIA-
TION FROM SYRIA. FINALLY, HUSSEIN'S RELATIONS WITH SYRIA
MAY WELL BE AN ASSET, HOWEVER WASTING IT NOW IS, FOR BOTH
THE U.S. AND SADAT. WHATEVER SADAT MAY BE SAYING ON THE
SURFACE, SOME OPENING FOR SYRIA IN THE LONGER TERM WILL
PROBABLY BE NECESSARY TO ACHIEVE A FULL SETTLEMENT. WE SEE
SYRIAN REACTIONS AGAINST JORDAN AS FALLING INTO SEVERAL
AREAS: DIPLOMATIC--RELATIONS COULD BE CUT OR DOWNGRADED OR JORDAN-
IANS COULD BE FURTHER FROZEN OUT OF THE RELATIVELY EASY FLOW OF
CONSULTATIONS WITH SYRIA. THE BORDER COULD BE CLOSED OR MASSIVE
SLOW-DOWNS OCCUR ON THE PASSAGE OF GOODS AND PEOPLE DESTINED
FOR JORDAN AND NOT IN TRANSIT. ON THE ECONOMIC SIDE, THE
SYRIAN MARKET, RECENTLY MORE BROADLY OPENED TO JORDAN,
COULD BE RESTRICTED. JORDAN COULD LOSE SOME ELECTRICAL
POWER IT NOW RECEIVES FROM SYRIA. SYRIA COULD HOLD BACK
THE PROGRESS ON THE BUILDING OF MAQARIN DAM AND COULD
SLOW DOWN OR TERMINATE A NUMBER OF JOINT ECONOMIC VENTURES
NOW UNDER WAY (I.E., TRUCKING) OR SOON TO BE STARTED (I.E.,
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FREE ZONE ON THE BORDER). IN THE INTERNAL SECURITY AND MILITARY
AREA, SYRIANS COULD FURTHER FREE FEDAYEEN TO COME ACROSS THE
BORDER WITH SPECIFIC DIRECTIVES TO ATTACK TARGETS IN JORDAN.
SYRIAN RELATIONS WITH JRA AND LIBYAN-SUPPORTED TERRORIST
GROUPS AND MAYBE EVEN CLANDESTINE COOPERATION WITH
IRAQI-RELATED PALESTINIANS COULD BE FOCUSSED ON

JORDANIAN TARGETS. SYRIAN MILITARY COULD CUT PRESENT COMMUNICATIONS LINKS AND MIGHT MAKE BORDER REGIONS SUBJECT TO INCIDENTS AND HARASSMENT. SYRIAN OVER-FLIGHTS AND RECONNAISSANCE MISSIONS COULD KEEP UP PRESSURE ON JORDAN. REQUIREMENT TO RE-ROUTE JORDAN CIVIL AIR TRAFFIC THROUGH IRAN OR EGYPT WOULD BE COSTLY AND PAINFUL FOR JORDAN. IN THE POLITICAL AREA, THERE IS RELATIVELY LITTLE COOPERATION. JORDAN AND SYRIA REPRESENT EACH OTHER OVERSEAS IN A FEW PLACES WHERE THE OTHER IS NOT PRESENT FOR VISAS AND CONSULAR MATTERS. CURRENT INTERMITTENT CONSULTATION ON INTERNATIONAL ISSUES WOULD CEASE. SHOULD THE SITUATION GO FAR ENOUGH, ONE COULD ENVISAGE EVEN HEAVIER MILITARY PRESSURE ON THE GROUND, ALTHOUGH THIS WOULD RAISE SERIOUSLY THE CONSEQUENCES FOR SYRIA FROM THE U.S. AND/OR ISRAEL. IN THE UNLIKELY EVENT THAT SYRIA AND IRAQ GOT TOGETHER, THE REACTION AGAINST JORDAN WOULD MOST LIKELY BE MORE EXTREME AND EXTENDED TO THE IRAQI BORDER REGION.

10. WHAT MERITS/DEMERITS DO YOU SEE IN OUR PROPOSING SUCH A THREE-WAY DIALOGUE AS A HALFWAY HOUSE TO HUSSEIN'S OPEN PARTICIPATION IN FACE-TO-FACE NEGOTIATIONS? WE SEE A THREE-WAY PRIVATE DIALOGUE AS BEING A BETTER SITUATION FOR HUSSEIN THAN EARLY OPEN PARTICIPATION IN FACE-TO-FACE NEGOTIATIONS. WE SEE INITIALLY, HOWEVER, A PRIVATE BILATERAL DIALOGUE AS BEING MORE SIGNIFICANT FOR HUSSEIN AND IN THE LONG RUN MORE LIKELY TO LEAD, PERHAPS BY STEPS AND STAGES, TO OPEN PARTICIPATION AT GENEVA. HOWEVER THE SUBSTANCE WILL BE CONTROLLING AND PROGRESS WOULD BE CONTINGENT ON THE PROVISIO THAT GENUINE
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NEGOTIATIONS ON KEY ISSUES SUCH AS TERRITORY IN THE WEST BANK CAN REALLY TAKE PLACE.

1. SUGGEST REPEAT TO CAIRO (FOR AMBASSADOR AND ATHERTON), DAMASCUS, AND TEL AVIV.
PICKERING

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